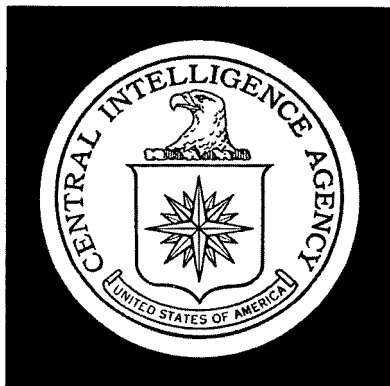


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Dept. review completed

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Viet Cong guerrillas fired at a US Navy minesweeper in a Saigon shipping channel and shot down a US helicopter which came to the assistance of the minesweeper (Para. 1). A South Vietnamese CIDG force reported contact with a large enemy force in Quang Nam Province (Para. 2). A US Marine patrol apparently engaged the same force about 18 hours later, killing 15 Communist soldiers (Para. 3). The Vinh Long Airfield was the target of a Viet Cong mortar attack on 22 January (Para. 4). Thirty-five Viet Cong were reported killed during a five-minute battle with a South Korean force in Khanh Hoa Province (Para. 5). At least 16 Communist soldiers were killed in two actions northwest of Hue on 22-23 January (Paras. 6-7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The removal of General Co as defense minister is still apparently not widely known (Para. 1). The Constituent Assembly has approved the first chapter of the constitution and some portions of the bill of rights (Paras. 2-3).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. Communist Political Developments: A French assessment of Hanoi's attitude toward a possible cessation of bombing based on the impressions of the East European and Soviet missions in Hanoi, indicates that Hanoi has not altered its basic positions significantly (Paras. 1-2).

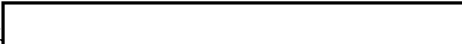
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VI. Other Major Aspects: Although rice production in the DRV in 1966 was below normal a reported shortfall of 800,000 tons appears exaggerated. (Paras. 1-3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Viet Cong guerrillas--continuing their harassment of traffic in the Saigon shipping lanes--on 23 January fired automatic weapons at a US Navy minesweeper on the Long Tau River, the main shipping channel from Saigon to the sea. One of the three US helicopters dispatched to suppress the enemy fire was shot down. Two crewmen aboard the minesweeper and all four helicopter crewmen were killed. The minesweeper was not damaged. Enemy losses are unknown.

2. A 120-man Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) force from the Thuong Duc Special Forces camp in Quang Nam Province engaged a Communist force estimated at two companies about 21 miles southwest of Da Nang on 22 January. A 200-man reaction force was sent to the area and in an ensuing battle, which lasted for nearly three hours, enemy losses were 49 dead and five captured. Twenty-five sampans were reported destroyed. Friendly casualties were three wounded.

3. Nearly 18 hours later, a US Marine company on patrol 18 miles southwest of Da Nang engaged a Communist force which was apparently being pursued by the CIDG forces. In the battle which followed, 15 enemy soldiers were killed and one captured. Friendly troops, who were supported by artillery and mortars, suffered no casualties.

4. Early on 22 January, an enemy force of undetermined size conducted a 30-minute mortar attack against the Vinh Long Airfield in the Mekong Delta province of Vinh Long. Armed US aircraft and helicopters supported the forces defending the airfield. There were no friendly casualties. Three US Army helicopters were damaged--one heavily. A reaction force was heli-lifted into a position designed to cut off the enemy retreat, but no contact was reported.

5. A company of the South Korean Capital Infantry Division reported killing 35 Viet Cong and capturing eight others in a short, fierce encounter on 22 January in coastal Khanh Hoa Province. The Koreans suffered no casualties during a five-minute battle. An arms cache was discovered, and among the items seized were 15,000 rounds of ammunition, 36 weapons including two Chinese manufactured machine guns, and a large quantity of grenades.

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6. Late on 22 January, about 25 miles northwest of Hue in Northern Thua Thien Province the "Black Panther" company of the 1st South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) Division came under small-arms and mortar fire from an estimated two-company enemy force. Communist losses were reported as 16 killed and one captured. No friendly casualties were reported.

7. In another action about 12 miles northwest of Hue early on 23 January, a Regular Force company in a night defensive position was attacked by an estimated company-size enemy force. Fifteen South Vietnamese were wounded; enemy losses are unknown.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The removal on 17 January of General Co as defense minister and vice premier apparently has still not become widely known in Saigon. The Western press, however, has associated an alert at Tan Son Nhut Air Base on 23 January with Co's possible return from an official visit to Taiwan and Hong Kong, and has reported that Co was under government orders to go to South Korea rather than return to Saigon.

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Constituent Assembly Activities

2. In sessions on 20 and 21 January, the Constituent Assembly completed approval of Chapter I of the draft constitution, containing "Basic Provisions," and made headway on Chapter II, the bill of rights. Debate over what is now Article Four of Chapter II, the anti-Communism proviso, provoked considerable controversy, but was finally approved in the following form: "The Republic of Vietnam opposes Communism in every form. Every activity designed to propagandize or carry out Communism is prohibited." According to the US Embassy, most of the deputies were determined to take a strong stand against Communism, even though this provision may make it difficult to find a legal basis for the projected national reconciliation program to be extended to Viet Cong ralliers.

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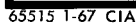
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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A French assessment of North Vietnam's attitude toward a possible cessation of US bombings, based in large measure on impressions gained by the French from the East European and Soviet missions in Hanoi, has been provided the US Embassy in Paris by the French foreign office. According to the paper, the French believe that Hanoi continues to insist on an unconditional halt to the air strikes and has indicated that this would have to be followed by a separate US initiative before negotiations could be undertaken. The French also expressed the belief that Hanoi has not ruled out the possibility of broadening the Liberation Front to include members of the "Saigon administration" as long as the NFLSV is portrayed as the exclusive spokesman for the population of South Vietnam. The Communists would insist, however, that the present group in power in Saigon would have to be eliminated, in the French view.

2. Recent efforts by the USSR and the East Europeans to get the Vietnamese to adopt a more flexible posture and to seek a satisfactory settlement through political means rather than military were also discussed in the French paper. These efforts, according to the French, had run up against Chinese pressures and, while the Vietnamese listened to such suggestions "with attention," they never committed themselves to heeding this advice.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

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North Vietnam's rice harvest in 1966 was short by 800,000 to a million tons.

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2. North Vietnam normally produces about 4.5 million tons of rice annually. Both early and late rice crops in 1966 were below average because of poor weather and disturbances caused by US bombings, but a firm estimate of the shortfall is not possible at this time. A shortage of 800,000 tons would seem to be excessive, however.

3. It is likely that the Communist nations would attempt to alleviate any food crisis in the DRV, even one resulting from a million ton shortfall. In such an eventuality, China would attempt to help with grain from its normal annual harvest of 170-180 million tons. If, because of its own problems, China could not provide this aid, the quantity needed to be supplied should be well within the capabilities of the USSR and other Communist countries.

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